

12-2006

A survey report on happiness index and determinants of happiness in Hong Kong

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Ho, L. S., & Wong, W. C. G. (2006). A survey report on happiness index and determinants of happiness in Hong Kong (CPPS Working Paper Series No.177). Retrieved from Lingnan University website: <http://commons.ln.edu.hk/cppswp/82/>

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Working Paper Series

Centre for Public Policy Studies
Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences

No. 177 (Dec 06) CPPS

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December 2006

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A Survey Report on Happiness Index and Determinants of Happiness in Hong Kong

Lok Sang Ho and Gary Wong*

1. Introduction

A survey was conducted by the authors in June 2005 using the facilities of the Survey Research Program of Lingnan University. It was a telephone survey using the random-digit-dialing sampling method. The target respondents were Hong Kong residents (excluding full-time student) aged 21 or above. We successfully interviewed 717 Hong Kong residents.

2. Empirical Findings

2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Happiness Index

2.1.1 Overall

On a scale of 0 to 100, it was found that the average index for Hong Kong is 71.4, which is considerably higher than the neutral 50 point, and suggests that Hong Kong people are predominantly happy. Moreover, most people feel that they are happier than 10 years ago, with the improvement index at 61.3, where any index above 50 suggests an improvement.

2.1.2 Sex

Females are generally happier than males, at 72.62 as compared to the male average of 69.58. This result resembles results obtained elsewhere.

2.1.3 Age and Education

Elderly people tend to be happier, with the 50 and above group scoring an average of 75.38, higher than the 71.08 of the 30-49 group. Younger adults in their twenties score only an average of

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67.39. Of the elderly group, those with university education are the happiest, with a score of 85. But this education premium does not show up for the younger population, a result probably related to much greater availability of university education in recent years.

2.1.4 Social and Political Values

Hong Kong people value civic liberties which are protected by the rule of law much more than electoral democracy.

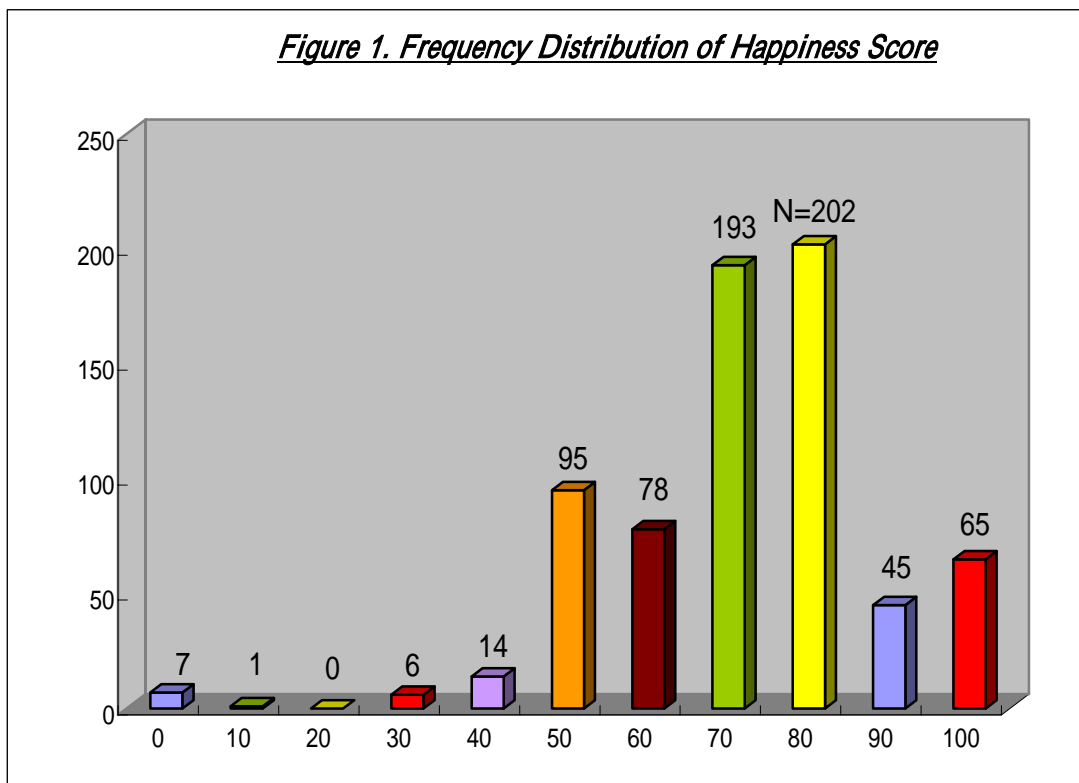


Figure 2. Happiness Index by Age

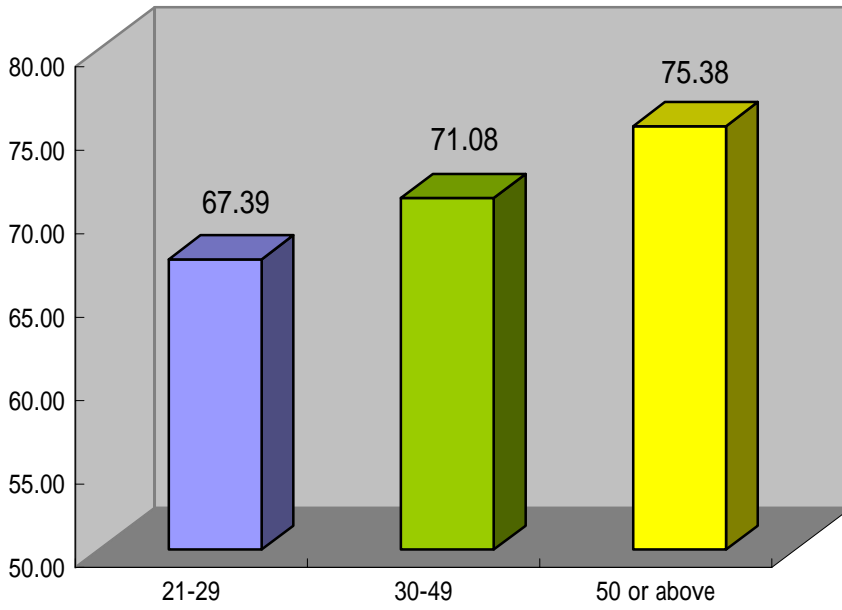
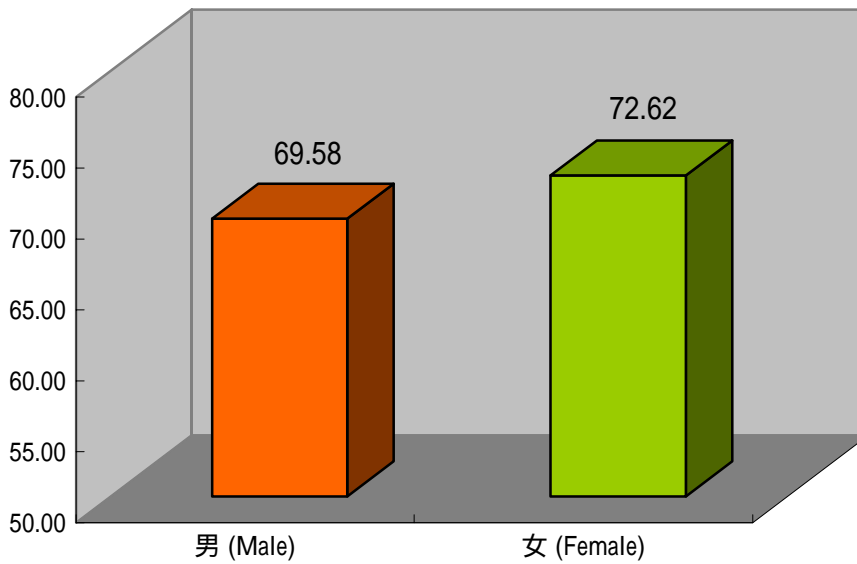
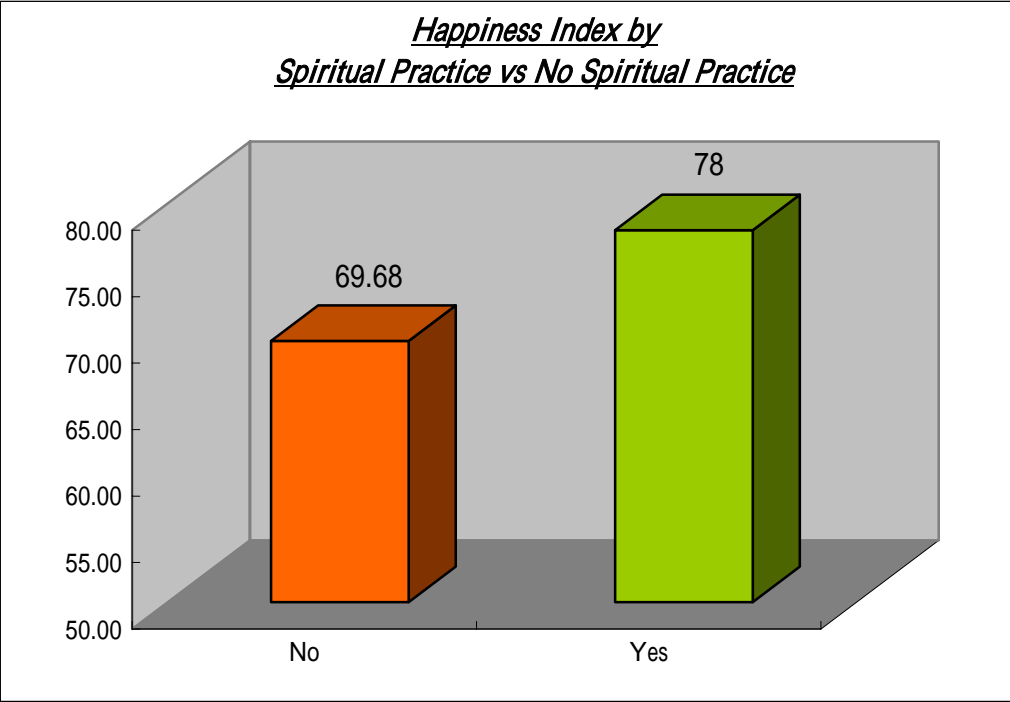
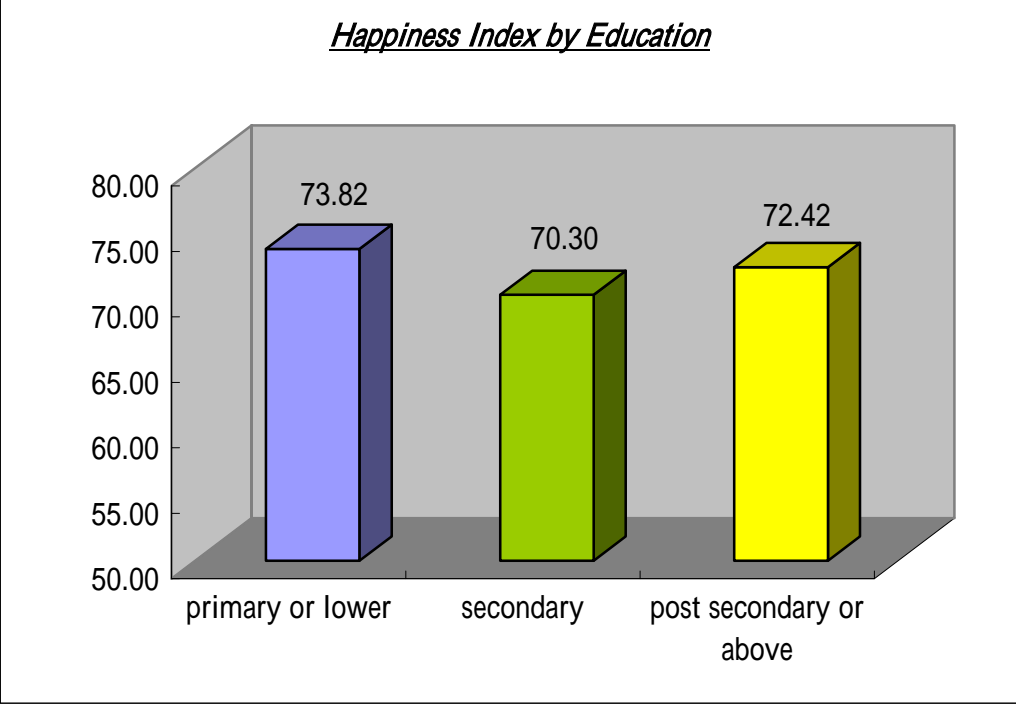
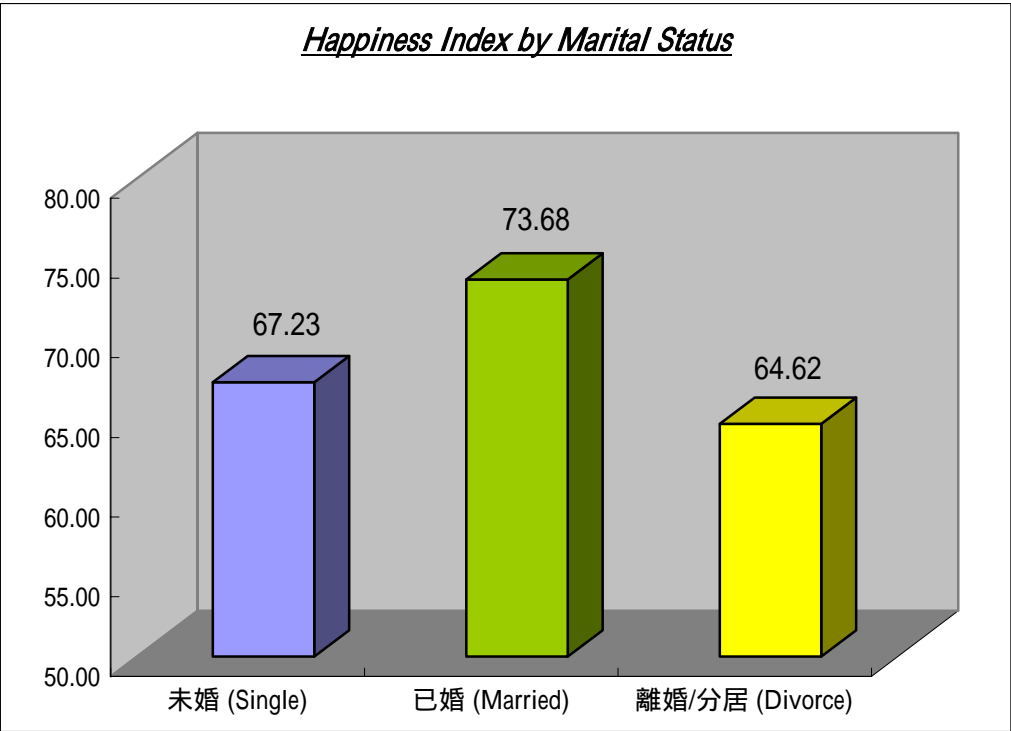
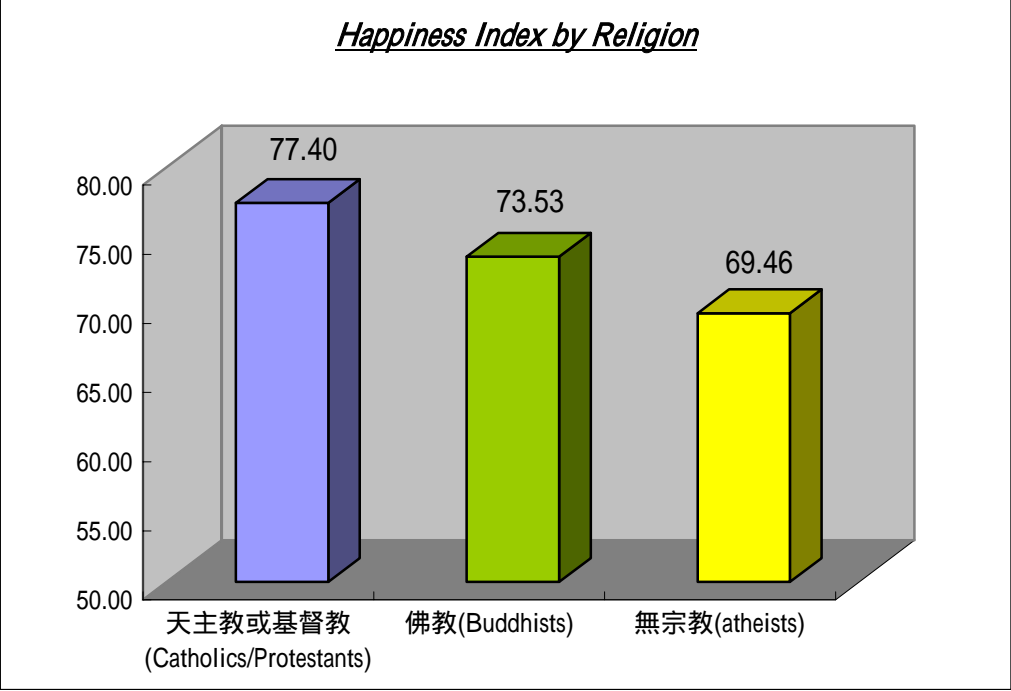


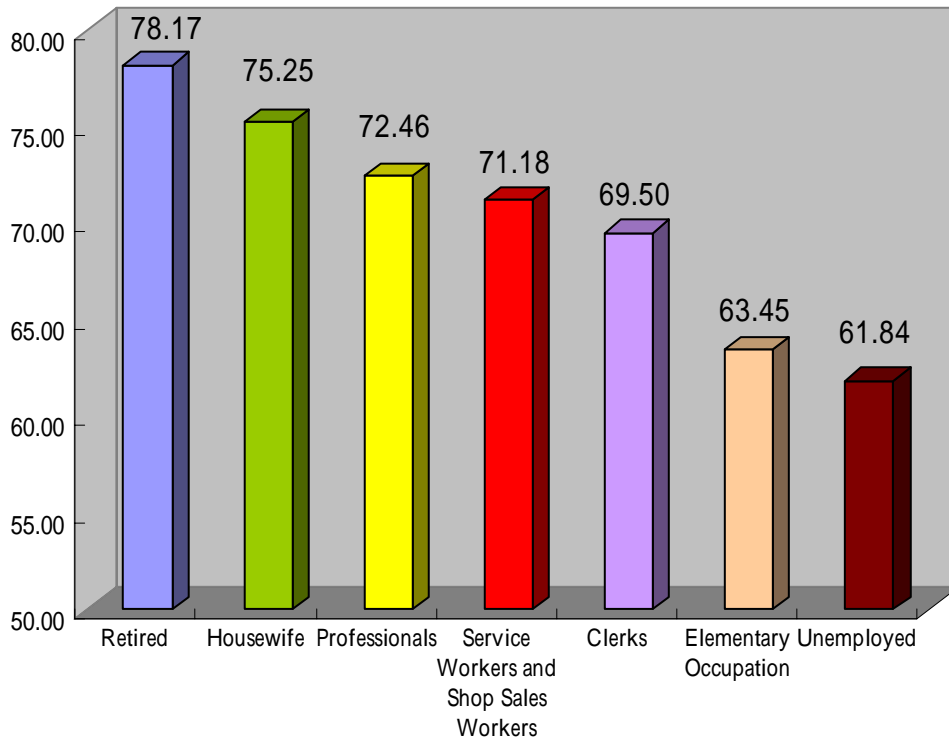
Figure 3. Happiness Index by Sex



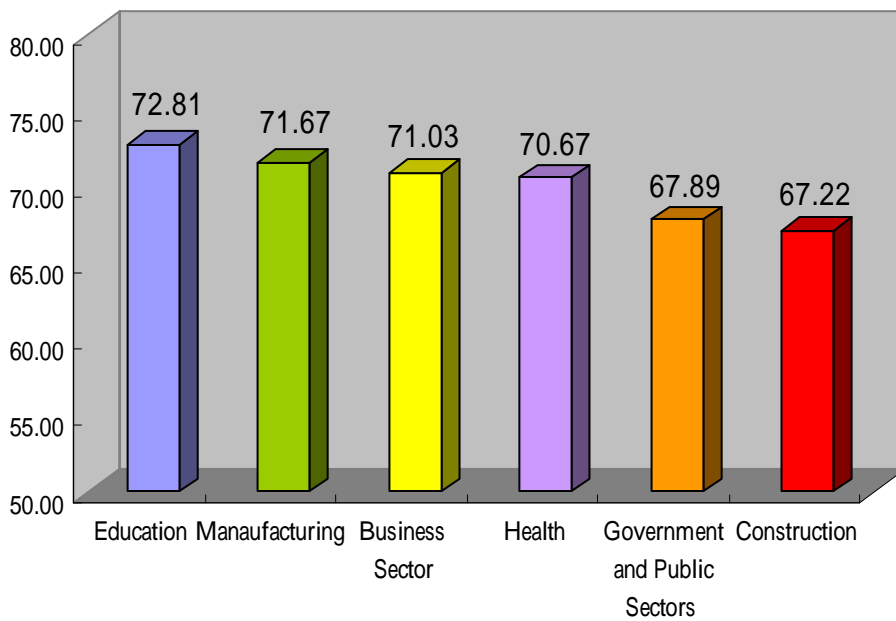




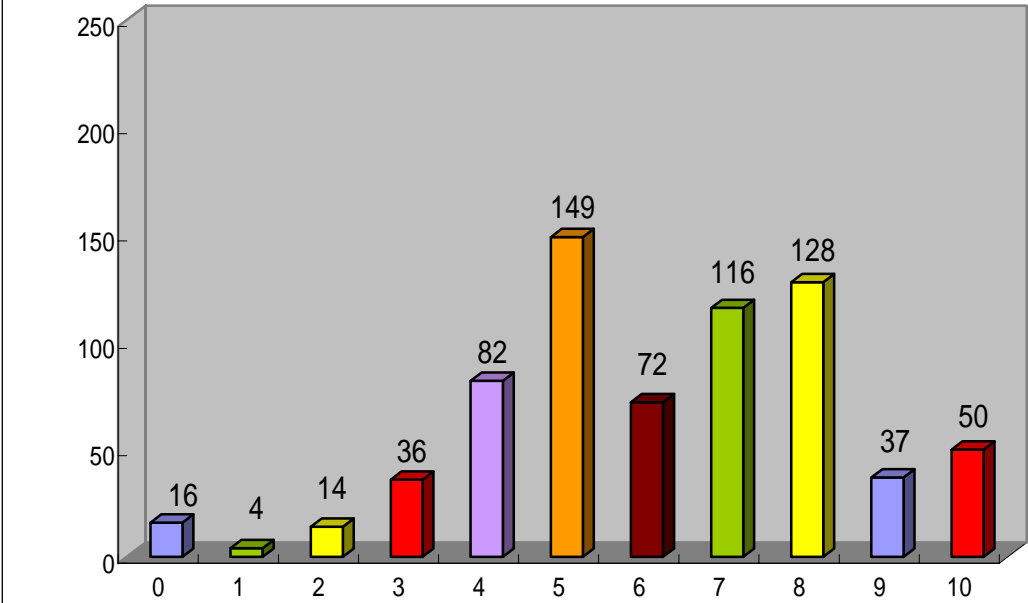
Happiness Index by Occupation



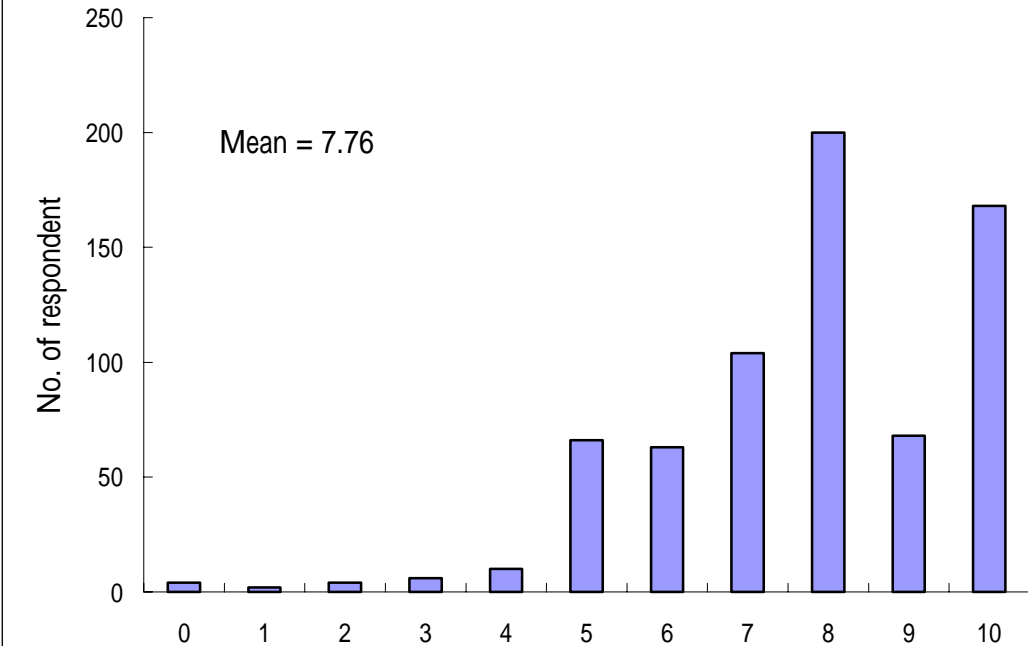
Happiness Index by Industries



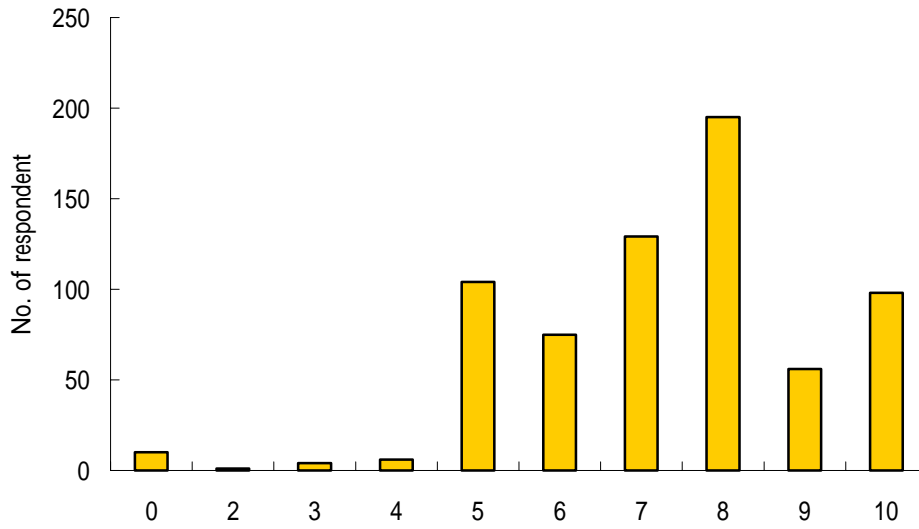
Are HK People Happier Over The Last 10 Years



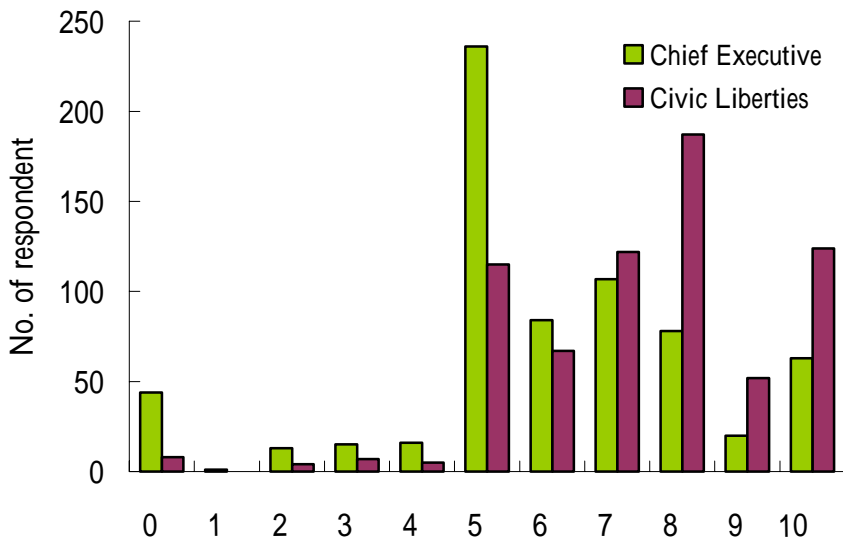
Importance of Health Care Services on Happiness



Importance of Formal Education on Happiness



Importance of Open Election of HKSAR Chief Executive vs Civic Liberties on Happiness



2.2 Regression Analysis: Determinants of Happiness

2.2.1 Variables Definitions

Table 1. presents the list of variables and their definitions. The dependent variable is the Happiness Index (Question 27) which ranges from 0 to 100. The number of observations for the dependent variable is based on valid responses only (i.e. all missing values were excluded from the analysis). Here we treat “Don't Know” responses and “Refuse to Respond” as “missing value”.

2.2.2 Regression Results

Those who put a high value on marriage, children, and friends, and harmonious personal relationships within the family are generally happier than others. Those who attach a higher value on money tend to be less happy, although the result is not statistically significant.

Table 1. Variables Definitions

Variable	Value
Dependent Variable	
Happiness Index	From zero to 100, 0 means not happy at all; 100 means most happy.
Independent Variable	
Young	1 = age 21-29, 0 = Other age groups
Old	1 = age 50 or above, 0 = Other age groups
Female	1 = Female, 0 = Male
Good Health	1 = Good Health Status, 0 = Others
Poor Health	1 = Good Health Status, 0 = Others
Fair Health (reference Group)	1 = Fair Health Status, 0 = Others
Spiritual Practice	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Married	1 = Married, 0 = Other marital status
Primary	1 = Primary graduate, 0 = Other educational attainments
Tertiary	1 = Tertiary graduate, 0 = Other educational attainments
Secondary (reference group)	1 = Secondary graduate, 0 = Other educational attainments
Low Income Household	1 = Household Income < \$HKD 20,000, 0 = Other Income levels
High Personal Income	1 = Personal Income > \$HKD 20,000, 0 = Other Income levels
Importance of Money (Q.2)	From 0 to 10, 0 means not important, 10 means very important
Importance of Marriage (Q.14)	From 0 to 10, 0 means not important, 10 means very important
Importance of Having Children (Q.17)	From 0 to 10, 0 means not important, 10 means very important
Importance of Harmonious Family (Q.23)	From 0 to 10, 0 means not important, 10 means very important
Importance of Friends (Q.20)	From 0 to 10, 0 means not important, 10 means very important

Table 2. Determinants of Happiness
 Dependent Variable: Happiness Index

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Significant level
Constant	65.016	0.000***
Young	-0.697	0.731
Old	5.138	0.058*
Female	2.494	0.060*
Poor Health	-7.012	0.011**
Poor Health X Spiritual Practice	9.634	0.075*
Good Health	4.820	0.000***
Spiritual Practice (Yes)	6.196	0.000***
Married	4.338	0.009***
Primary	1.991	0.387
Tertiary	0.853	0.582
Low Income Household	-2.660	0.071*

Table 2 indicates that spiritual practice is really the single most important variable that affects the happiness index of the respondent. The coefficient for spiritual practice is not only the biggest positive factor, but even when an individual suffers from poor health, the fact that he/she engages in some form of spiritual practice may more than offset the negative effect from poor health. (The interactive coefficient is numerically larger than the coefficient for poor health) The high coefficient for primary education is misleading because it is collinear with old age. Among the younger groups there do not exist anyone with primary education only.

Table 3. Determinants of Happiness
 Dependent Variable: Happiness Index

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Significant level
Constant	33.280	0.000***
Importance of Money	-0.186	0.536
Importance of Marriage	0.996	0.007***
Importance of Having Children	1.262	0.000***
Importance of Harmonious Family	1.586	0.000***
Importance of Friends	0.741	0.043**
Spiritual Practice (Yes)	5.566	0.000***
Young	-2.530	0.152
Old	3.993	0.070*
Female	1.904	0.119
Tertiary	4.863	0.001***
Importance of Money X High Personal Income	-0.391	0.092*
Importance of Marriage X Married	0.269	0.179

For people with high personal income, valuing money highly actually diminishes happiness. On the other hand, people who value personal relationships, especially family life, tend to be happier. Again, the coefficient on valuing spirituality is the biggest positive among all coefficients.

Appendix

Questionnaire

您好！我係嶺南大學打來的。現正進行一項關於快樂的意見調查。

How are you! We are phoning from Lingnan University. We are conducting a study on happiness in Hong Kong.

請問府上的電話號碼是否 XXXXXXXX (電話)?

Please confirm if your phone number is XXXXXXXX

請問府上有沒有 21 歲或以上的 非學生 的香港永久居民呢?

Are there adults over 21 who are HK residents but are not students in your apartment?

有，請你叫即將生日那位來聽電話

然後輸入合格者人數「1」以及被訪者性別

沒有，說謝謝，中止訪問，按 ESC

(for positive responses) Can I talk to the one whose next birthday is closest to today?)

1. 請問你對你的經濟狀況是否滿意？ 0 分代表十分不滿意，10 分代表十分滿意。

Are you satisfied with your financial conditions? 0 indicates most unsatisfied, 10 indicates most satisfied.

(00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分

(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分

(97) 沒有意見 “have nothing to say” (98) 拒絕回答 “refuse to respond”

2. 請問金錢對你的快樂有多重要？ 0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important is money to your happiness. 0 indicates not important at all. 10 means most important.

(00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分

(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分

(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

3. 請問穩定的收入對你的快樂有多重要？ 0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important is stability of income to your happiness? 0 indicates not important at all. 10 indicates most important.

(00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分

(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分

(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

4. 目前特區政府是以公帑大量津貼醫療服務，市民因而可以只付出低廉的代價，而得到質素不錯的醫療服務。請問你對這種情況有多滿意？0分代表十分不滿意，10分代表十分滿意。

The SAR government currently subsidizes health care heavily thus allowing Hong Kong people to get reasonably good health care at a low cost. How satisfied are you with this situation? 0 indicates most unsatisfied, 10 indicates most satisfied.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

5. 請問優質的醫療服務，對你的快樂有多重要？0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is a high quality health care system to your happiness? 0 indicates unimportant, 10 indicates most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

6. 你認為毋須應付巨大的醫療支出，對你的快樂有多重要？0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is it to you to be free from the need to pay high health care costs that stretches your financial limits? 0 is most unimportant. 10 is most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分 (06) 6分
(07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

7. 請問香港所提供的「現代社會自由」〔包括法律保障下的思想自由、出版自由、宗教自由、買賣自由、結社集會自由等〕對你的快樂增加了還是減少了？0分代表減少了很多，10分代表增加了很多，5分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

How important to you is being protected under the rule of law to enjoy civic liberties such as freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, free access to markets, freedom of assembly etc. Living in HK does this consideration increase or decrease your happiness. 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

8. 你認為「現代社會自由」對你的快樂有多重要？0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is civic liberties of modern society to you? 0 indicates not important at all; 10 indicates most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

9. 香港目前的政治制度沒有全面普選。這對你的快樂增加了還是減少了？0分代表減少了很多，10分代表增加了很多，5分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

HK presently does not offer popular elections. Does this increase or reduce your happiness? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

10. 你認為普選產生行政長官對你的快樂有多重要？0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is open election of the Chief Executive to you? 0 indicates not important at all. 10 indicates most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

11. 你認為普選產生全部立法會議員對你的快樂有多重要？0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is open election of all legislators to you? 0 indicates not important at all; 10 indicates most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

12. 請問你的婚姻狀況是未婚、已婚、同居、離婚還是分居？

Please advise us of your marital status:

- (1) 未婚 (Single)
- (2) 已婚，配偶仍健在 [不用追問] (Married, spouse alive)
- (3) 已婚，配偶已過身 [不用追問] (Married, spouse deceased)
- (4) 同居 (Cohabitation)
- (5) 離婚 (Divorced)

- (6) 分居 (Separated)
- (7) 其他 _____ (Others)
- (8) 拒絕回答

13. 你現時的婚姻狀況對你的快樂增加了還是減少了？0 分代表減少了很多，10 分代表增加了很多，5 分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Does your current marital status increase or reduce your happiness? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
- (06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
- (97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

14. 你認為 婚姻 [指正式婚姻，不包括同居] 對你的快樂有多重要？0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important to you is formal marriage? 0 indicates not important at all; 10 indicates most important.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
- (06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
- (97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

15. 你有無子女？

Do you have children?

- (1) 有 (2) 沒有 (8) 拒絕回答

Have Do Not Have Refuse to answer

16. 你因此增加了快樂還是減少了？0 分代表減少了很多，10 分代表增加了很多，5 分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Has your happiness increased or decreased as a result of this? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
- (06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
- (97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

17. 你認為 生兒育女 對你的快樂有多重要？0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important is having children to your happiness. 0 indicates not important at all; 10 indicates most important.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
- (06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
- (97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

18. 你有沒有要好的朋友？

Do you have good friends?

- (1) 有 (2) 沒有 (8) 拒絕回答
Yes No Refuse to answer

19. 你因此增加了快樂還是減少了？0 分代表減少了許多，10 分代表增加了許多，5 分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Has this increased your happiness? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

20. 你認為 要好的朋友 對你的快樂有多重要？0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important is having good friends to your happiness? 0 means not important at all; 10 means most important.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

21. 你是否同意：你與家人的相處融洽？0 分代表十分不同意，10 分代表十分同意。

Do you agree: You have harmonious relations with your family? 0 means total disagreement; 10 means total agreement.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

22. 你因此增加了快樂還是減少了？0 分代表減少了許多，10 分代表增加了許多，5 分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Has this increased your happiness or reduced it? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

23. 你認為與家人融洽相處，對你的快樂有多重要？0 分代表十分不重要，10 分代表十分重要。

How important is being on harmonious terms with your family? 0 means not important at all; 10 means most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

24. 你認為你在小學、中學或大學接受的正規教育，對你的快樂是增加了還是減少了？0分代表減少了很多，10分代表增加了很多，5分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Has your formal education increased or reduced your happiness? 10 indicates a lot of increase, 5 indicates no decrease or increase, 0 indicates a lot of decrease.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(96) 沒有接受過學校教育 I have no formal education.
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

25. 你認為你在小學、中學或大學接受的正規教育，對你的快樂有多重要？

[如在上題答案是"沒有接受過學校教育"，則問：

你認為你沒有接受過學校教育，對你的快樂有多重要？]

0分代表十分不重要，10分代表十分重要。

How important is your formal education in affecting your happiness? 0 means not important at all; 10 means most important.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分 (96) 沒有接受過學校教育
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

26. 你有沒有經常上教堂、禱告、靜坐或進行任何的靈修活動？

Do you regularly go to churches, pray, meditate, or otherwise engage in some kind of spiritual practice?

(1) 有 Yes I do.
(2) 沒有 No I don't.
(8) 拒絕回答 Refuse to answer

27. 整體來說，你有幾快樂呢？0分代表十分不快樂，10分代表十分快樂。

Overall, taking every thing in consideration, how happy are you? 0 means not happy at all; 10 means most happy.

(00) 0分 (01) 1分 (02) 2分 (03) 3分 (04) 4分 (05) 5分
(06) 6分 (07) 7分 (08) 8分 (09) 9分 (10) 10分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

28. 相對過去 10 年來說，你現在的快樂是增加了還是減少了？0 分代表減少了很多，10 分代表增加了很多，5 分代表沒有增加、沒有減少。

Over the past 10 years, has your happiness increased or decreased? 0 means decreased a lot; 10 means increased a lot.

- (00) 0 分 (01) 1 分 (02) 2 分 (03) 3 分 (04) 4 分 (05) 5 分
(06) 6 分 (07) 7 分 (08) 8 分 (09) 9 分 (10) 10 分
(97) 沒有意見 (98) 拒絕回答

29. 請問你現時的個人平均收入每月多少？

What is your monthly personal income?

- (00) 無收入 0 (01) < \$3,000 (02) \$3,000-3,999
(03) \$4,000-4,999 (04) \$5,000-5,999 (05) \$6,000-6,999
(06) \$7,000-7,999 (07) \$8,000-8,999 (08) \$9,000-9,999
(09) \$10,000-14,999 (10) \$15,000-19,999 (11) \$20,000-24,999
(12) \$25,000-29,999 (13) \$30,000-34,999 (14) \$35,000-39,999
(15) \$40,000-49,999 (16) \$50,000-74,999 (17) \$75,000-99,999
(18) \$100,000 或以上 above \$100,000
(97) 很難說 difficult to say
(98) 不願回答 unwilling to tell

30. 請問你現時的家庭平均收入每月多少？

What is your average monthly income?

- (00) 無收入 0 (01) < \$3,000 (02) \$3,000-3,999
(03) \$4,000-4,999 (04) \$5,000-5,999 (05) \$6,000-6,999
(06) \$7,000-7,999 (07) \$8,000-8,999 (08) \$9,000-9,999
(09) \$10,000-14,999 (10) \$15,000-19,999 (11) \$20,000-24,999
(12) \$25,000-29,999 (13) \$30,000-34,999 (14) \$35,000-39,999
(15) \$40,000-49,999 (16) \$50,000-74,999 (17) \$75,000-99,999
(18) \geq \$100,000
(97) 不知道 / 很難說 Difficult to say
(98) 不願回答 Unwilling to tell

31. 請問你的年齡大約是 [以上一次生日計算]

What is your age at your last birthday?

- (01) 21-24 歲 (02) 25-29 歲 (03) 30-34 歲
(04) 35-39 歲 (05) 40-44 歲 (06) 45-49 歲
(07) 50-54 歲 (08) 55-59 歲 (09) 60-64 歲
(10) \geq 65
(98) 不願回答 unwilling to tell

32. 請問你的教育程度是

What is your education level?

- (01) 未接受正規教育 no formal education (02) 小學 primary school
- (03) 中一至中三 (初中) Junior High (04) 中四至中五 (高中) Senior High
- (05) 預科 Matriculation (06) 大專 (文憑) Post-secondary
- (07) 大學或以上 University or above (08) 其他(請註明) : others(explain)
- (98) 不願回答 Not willing to tell

33. 你的職位是

What is your occupation?

- (01) 經理及行政人員 manager/executive (02) 專業人 professionals
- (03) 輔助專業人員 auxiliary professionals (04) 文員 clerical
- (05) 服務工作及商店銷售人員 service workers/sales staff (06) 工藝和有關人員 arts/craft (07) 機台和機械操作員和裝配員 operators and assembly line workers (08) 非技術工 non-technical workers (09) 漁農業熟練工人及不能分類的職位 other workers
- (10) 家庭主婦 [跳至第 35 題] housewife (jump to 35)
- (11) 失業、待業 [跳至第 35 題] out of a job (jump to 35)
- (12) 退休 [跳至第 35 題] retired (jump to 35)
- (98) 不願回答 [跳至第 35 題] not willing to tell (jump to 35)

34. 你的行業是

What industry do you work in?

- (1) 商業服務 Business services
- (2) 政府及公共機構 [教育及醫療除外] Govt and public sector other than education and health care
- (3) 教育 education (4) 醫療 health care
- (5) 製造業 manufacturing (6) 建造業 construction
- (8) 不願回答 not willing to tell

35. 你的宗教信仰是

What is your religion

- (1) 天主教或基督教 Roman Catholic/Christian (2) 佛教 Buddhist
- (3) 伊斯蘭教 Islam (4) 道教 Daoist
- (5) 印度教 Hinduism (6) 其他宗教 Others(explain)
- (7) 無宗教 no religion
- (8) 不願回答 not willing to tell

36. 你的健康狀況是

How would you rate your health status?

- (1) 較差 Not that good (2) 普通 fair (3) 良好 good (8) 不願回答 not willing to tell

-- 訪問已經完結，多謝你接受訪問 --

Interview is over; thank you for your assistance.